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## WAS JESUS CHRIST A PACIFIST?

IT is charged against the Christian Church that it condoned the ideals and policies which ended in this war. There is evidence that this same Christian Church is now "blessing" the war which it did nothing to prevent. There are other evidences that it is now planning to exploit the tragedy of it to its own interest. There is no systematic, general, or even sporadic, attempt on the part of the Christian Church anywhere to promote the ideals and policies of an international organization. There is little evidence that the Christian Church has, during the last generation, done any concrete thing to prevent the present war. Priests in all lands, belligerent and neutral, pray to the same Christ to "bless" their troops, their rulers, and the whole infernal paraphernalia that brought on the present situation. Cardinal Mercier, of Belgium, for example, delivered a most eloquent address in Brussels on the 21st of last July, on the occasion of the Belgian National Holiday. One pathetic thing about this very great address was the way in which the eminent Cardinal faced both ways upon the question of retaliation. He said first, with great tenderness: "Our lips, purified by the fire of Christian charity, do not utter any hate. To hate is to take the misfortune of others for our goal and to delight in it. However great our griefs may be, we do not wish any evil to those who inflict them upon us. National concord with us is allied to universal fraternity." But His Eminence then turned to the ancient authority of St. Thomas of Aquino, and pointed out the necessity for "public prosecution," calling for a kind of "public vengeance," even though it "may irritate the sentimentality of a weak soul," and spoke approvingly of "an avenging weapon of slighted right."

And so again we are confronted with the old question of the attitude of Jesus Christ toward war. Did he or did he not teach the legitimacy of military force as a means of settling disputes? Was Jesus Christ a pacifist?

Now we have no disposition to quibble about this question. Whether God and Christ are or are not what we make them is irrelevant. It may be true that if one's nature demands a belief in a war-Christ, one will find such a Christ in spite of reason, exegesis, or fact. But how was it with the Christ of the New Testament?

It is disquieting that he left us no direct word upon such an important matter as "preparedness." There must have been Plattsburges in those days, but Jesus does not refer to them. The Roman "National Guard" drew no comment from him. We of today are considerably stirred up about education, art, science, business, politics, nationalism. Jesus had nothing to say about any of these great problems.

Stranger still, he proceeded to give voice to certain utterances which seem to have a militaristic ring. In the 24th chapter of Matthew, for instance, we are told that "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." Thus we are told that Jesus taught the inevitableness of war. And this in spite of what he goes on to add: "All these things are the beginning of trouble. . . . And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. . . . But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

Again, in Matthew 10: 34, we have the familiar words: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." This is quoted by the militarist as final and conclusive. But in this case the infinitive *to send* is, as has often been pointed out, an infinitive not of purpose, but of result—a forecast of what was to happen to the disciples, not of what the disciples were to do unto others. The conception is figurative throughout, and has no relation whatsoever to international war.

And then in the 11th chapter of Mark appears the account of the temple episode. Nowhere, however, in this, the most authentic account of the four, do we find that Jesus had any kind of an instrument in his hand. His aim was simply to oust the desecrating men and animals from the Holy Temple. The demonstration was a demonstration not of physical but of moral force. It is interesting to note that Matthew and Luke, both of whom tell this same story, agree substantially with Mark. It is only in John, "the interpreter," the least historical of the four, that we read of a "scourge of cords." But even here there is no evidence that Jesus struck a man. Anyhow, no mere whip in the hands of

a lone and weary man would have driven an unwilling crowd before it.

The arguments for war based upon the teachings of Jesus are best described by one Shakespeare:

"What damned error but some sober brow to bless it,  
And approve it with a 'Text.'"

Jesus everywhere was opposed to physical force. He had nothing but rebuke for the one who smote the servant of the high priest. His behavior under temptation in the Wilderness, his own analysis of himself on the way to Cæsarea-Philippi, his supreme self-mastery in the Garden of Gethsemane, at Golgotha, showed him superior to physical force, showed him, indeed, surcharged with a super-force, the force of love, of service, of sacrifice, of gentleness, of persuasion and consolation, the very force that won eight million followers within two centuries and overcame the Roman world. There was nothing in him of the camp or of the modern emphasis that States rest only on guns and battleships. The heart and faith and message of this man was of peace. The heart and faith and message of the Christian Church for its first two hundred years, said by some to be the only Christian Church which we have ever had, was the heart and faith and message of peace. The supreme fact of the Christian ethic was then, and ought to be now, that Jesus Christ was a pacifist.

### BETHINKING OURSELVES

**M**R. LAFCADIO HEARN wrote in 1894, at the time when Japan was declaring war upon China and getting ready by a force of arms to take her "legitimate place among the strong nations of the world," these significant words: "The new Japan will be richer and stronger, and in many things wiser, but it will neither be so happy nor so kindly as the old." We call these words significant because they are suggestive.

Let us bethink ourselves. It may be true that the pacifists are engaged in putting salt on the tail of Utopia. So be it. There can be no valid objection to such a proceeding. Every thinking man is engaged in putting salt on the tail of his Utopia. But there are tastes in Utopias. We have been watching the militaristic brands of Utopia, and we must decide that they are not our brand. We have beheld nations setting up such Utopias, and in their name slaughtering millions of unoffending boys. We question, therefore, not only the methods employed to attain unto such Utopias, but raise the further question of the validity and desirability of any such kind of Utopia. We are convinced that the followers after these force-begotten Utopias are not getting what they think they are getting. They are not even headed in the direction of the Utopias they think they are pursuing.

The present war has had one profound influence which we judge is world-wide. It has produced a universal hypochondriasm. A hypochondriac is a person who has lost both his faiths and hopes, and has left only his hobgoblins of fear. The political discussions within our United States, for example, relate primarily to questions of defense. They spring from fears. We hear little of wholesome international policies. The politics of our country in a time of peace are the politics of cowardice. We have lost our faiths. We have drifted from our old moorings. Our thought and speech are dominated by fears. We are suffering from an attack of hypochondriasm.

Now we would not insist that we must love and hate alike. We do not even believe that it is necessary that we should all have the same opinions. As we try to bethink ourselves, we are inclined to insist, however, that there must be a working majority with similar principles. Chateaubriand, once French Minister of Foreign Affairs, traveler, diplomat, and scholar, wrote: "In order that two men may be true friends, they must have contrary opinions, similar principles, and different hates and affections." We pacifists are interested in principles. We would abolish wild Utopias. We would cure the disease of hypochondriasm.

We are not vending "pills for the cure of earthquakes." We are pursuing no "damn barren ideality." We are anxious to avoid the reputation of disseminating "loose gas." We believe, and we are willing to sacrifice our all for the belief, in that development of States which shall eventually make it possible for each, man or woman, to be free to pursue life's permanent satisfactions in the service of an advancing society. We are perfectly clear that such a supreme product of civilized humanity must be born out of the holy wedlock of liberty and discipline. It may be true, as Lord Bacon said, that the philosophers are engaged in making imaginary laws for imaginary commonwealths, and that their discourses are "as the stars, which give little light because they are so high." If so, we pacifists are not philosophers. We bethink ourselves in terms of democracy. And democracy means something to us. It means that condition of living together whereby human beings will be free to pursue not simply their pleasures, but that larger Utopia which embodies the constructive play of memory and imagination in the pursuit of a genuine "Happiness." Not the happiness that militant Japan thinks she has discovered. It is not that. It is rather that larger Aristotelian happiness which is finer and greater than any mere pleasure, because more nearly complete.

The realization of this ideal of the pacifist will be the product of bethinking ourselves. In times of stress we shall yet in some future time think first of friendly